

2001HOCHI01040 - UNCLASSIFIED

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ACTION EAP-00

INFO LOG-00 AID-00 AMAD-00 CIAE-00 SRPP-00 EB-00 UTED-00  
H-01 TEDE-00 INR-00 IO-00 L-00 NSAE-00 OIC-02  
OPIC-01 PRS-00 P-00 SP-00 SS-00 STR-00 TEST-00  
TRSE-00 USIE-00 PRM-01 DRL-02 G-00 NFAT-00 SAS-00  
/007W

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FM AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5494  
INFO AMEMBASSY HANOI PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY TOKYO  
AMEMBASSY BEIJING  
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA  
AMCONSUL HONG KONG  
USMISSION GENEVA  
ASEAN COLLECTIVE  
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI  
JICCPAC HONOLULU HI  
SECDEF WASHDC  
DIA WASHDC  
NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HO CHI MINH CITY 001040

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/BCLTV AND EAP/PD/MSPEER  
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DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR DRL/IRF  
CINCPAC FOR FPA  
SECDEF FOR ISA/EA/LSTERN

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: PHUM KIRF VM HUMANR REFFREE  
SUBJECT: BUDDHIST IMMOLATION IN DANANG

REF: A) HANOI 1340 B) HCMC 0734 AND PREVIOUS

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: THE PARIS-BASED INFORMATION BUREAU OF THE UNIFIED BUDDHIST CHURCH OF VIETNAM (UBCV) AND SEVERAL INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICES REPORTED THAT A UBCV LAY BUDDHIST SUPPORTER COMMITTED SUICIDE BY IMMOLATION IN DANANG ON SEPTEMBER 2 TO PROTEST REPRESSION OF THE BANNED UBCV. BUDDHIST OFFICIALS IN HANOI CONFIRMED ONLY THAT A PERSON FROM A BUDDHIST FAMILY IN DANANG HAD COMMITTED SUICIDE BY IMMOLATION BUT CLAIMED TO BE UNAWARE OF THE REASONS FOR HIS ACT. UBCV MONKS IN HUE TOLD HCMC POLOFF ON SEPTEMBER 4 THAT SEVERAL OTHER MONKS IN HUE AND DANANG WERE ALSO CONSIDERING SELF-IMMOLATION. SUCH ACTS ARE UNLIKELY TO ENCOURAGE OR FORCE THE GVN INTO DIALOGUE WITH THE UBCV. END SUMMARY.

IMMOLATION IN DANANG

12. (U) ACCORDING TO THE PARIS-BASED INFORMATION BUREAU OF THE UBCV AND SEVERAL INTERNATIONAL PRESS ACCOUNTS, 61-YEAR-OLD HO TAN ANH (VIETNAMESE NAME ORDER - LAST NAME, MIDDLE NAME, FIRST NAME), A LAY UBCV SUPPORTER UNCLASSIFIED

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AFFILIATED WITH THE BUDDHIST YOUTH MOVEMENT IN QUANG NAM PROVINCE, BURNED HIMSELF TO DEATH BETWEEN 3:30 AND 4:30 A.M. IN A PARK IN DANANG CITY ON SEPTEMBER 2, VIETNAM'S INDEPENDENCE DAY.

13. (U) ANH REPORTEDLY SENT SEVERAL LETTERS TO THE UBCV INFORMATION BUREAU TO FORWARD TO INTERNATIONAL LEADERS EXPLAINING THAT THE SELF-IMMOLATION WAS IN PROTEST OF CONTINUED REPRESSION OF THE UBCV, ESPECIALLY THE FORCED CONFINEMENTS OF UBCV LEADERS THICH HUYEN QUANG AND THICH QUANG DO. (NOTE: THICH QUANG DO HAS BEEN CONFINED UNDER GUARD TO HIS LIVING QUARTERS IN HCMC SINCE JUNE AFTER HE ANNOUNCED HE WOULD LEAD A DELEGATION OF MONKS FROM THROUGHOUT THE SOUTHERN PART OF VIETNAM TO ESCORT UBCV SUPREME PATRIARCH THICH HUYEN QUANG FROM QUANG NGAI PROVINCE TO HCMC. REFTELS REPORTED ON THE ACTIVITIES OF UBCV MONKS IN HCMC AND HUE IN JUNE AND ON THE POLICE AND SECURITY RESPONSE. END NOTE.)

14. (SBU) IN A MEETING WITH EMBASSY POL/C AND POLOFF ON SEPTEMBER 5 IN HANOI, SENIOR MONKS OF THE VIETNAM BUDDHIST SANGHA EXECUTIVE COUNCIL CONFIRMED THAT THEY HAD RECEIVED NEWS FROM DANANG THAT A PERSON FROM A BUDDHIST FAMILY HAD INDEED KILLED HIMSELF BY IMMOLATION. THEY DECLINED TO CHARACTERIZE HIM AS A MONK, AND SAID THAT THEY HAD NO INFORMATION ABOUT HIS REASONS FOR SUICIDE.

15. (SBU) HCMC POLOFF CONTACTED MONKS AT TU HIEU PAGODA AND BAO QUOC PAGODA IN HUE ON SEPTEMBER 4 BY TELEPHONE. THE MONKS ALSO CONFIRMED THAT THE IMMOLATION TOOK  
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PLACE, AND ADDED THAT SEVERAL OTHER PERSONS IN DANANG AND HUE ARE CONSIDERING SELF-IMMOLATION IN PROTEST OF THE CONFINEMENTS OF THICH HUYEN QUANG AND THICH QUANG DO. HCMC POLOFF SEPARATELY CONTACTED MONKS FROM PHUOC THANH PAGODA AND PHUOC DUYEN PAGODA IN HUE WHO HAD ATTEMPTED TO TRAVEL TO QUANG NGAI PROVINCE IN JUNE. UNTIL POLOFF'S CALL, HOWEVER, THEY HAD BEEN UNAWARE OF THE IMMOLATION IN DANANG.

16. (SBU) DANANG'S DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS CONSULAR SECTION OFFICIALS TOLD HCMC POLOFF ON SEPTEMBER 4 THAT THEY KNEW NOTHING ABOUT THE INCIDENT. DANANG POLICE CONFIRMED TO THE DEUTSCHE PRESSE-AGENTUR, HOWEVER, THAT ON SEPTEMBER 2 THEY HAD FOUND AND BURIED THE CHARRED REMAINS OF AN UNIDENTIFIED MAN.

COMMENT

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17. (SBU) THE TIMING OF THE IMMOLATION REMAINS UNCLEAR. SUCH ACTS, ESPECIALLY IF FOLLOWED BY MORE THAT RECEIVE SIMILAR INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION, WILL BE UNLIKELY TO SWAY THE GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE UBCV AND MAY INSTEAD MAKE MORE DIFFICULT ANY CHANCES FOR DIALOGUE.

TANNENBAUM

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